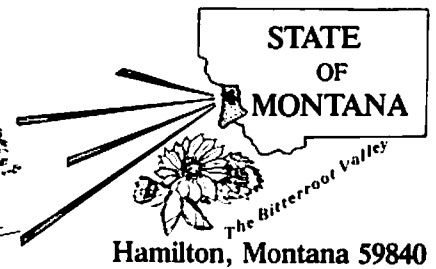
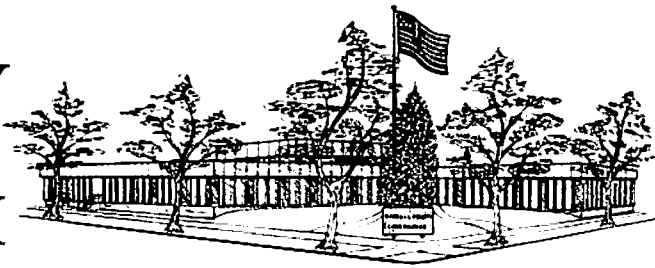


COUNTY OF RAVALLI



To: Board of County Commissioners
Regarding: Perceived need for building permits in Ravalli County
Date: September 17, 2007

After considerable discussion and consideration, over a period of many months, the Board of Health at its August 8th meeting voted unanimously to “strongly encourage” the County Commissioners to institute the use of building permits for all construction projects in Ravalli County.

Even though the County does not specifically require building permits currently, there are requirements for a wastewater treatment system permit, a well permit, a road access (driveway) permit, a floodplain permit, a 310 or 404 (stream bank or wetland) permit where applicable, and a sewer connection permit if located in the Victor or Corvallis Sewer Districts. Commercial buildings must acquire a variety of additional permits from the State.

Beyond these permits, it would be helpful if there were a system for monitoring compliance with various voluntary zoning districts, property covenants, and compliance with conditions on subdivision approvals. In the near future, we are expecting there will be additional zoning and streamside setback requirements to monitor and control.

The Health Board has been approached by a number of people who were fined for starting house construction without a valid wastewater treatment system permit, asking forgiveness from their fines because they were told there were “no building permits” in Ravalli County, or didn’t know enough to ask, or assumed that because they had a State approved subdivision lot “everything was taken care of”, et cetera.

We are trying to inform the public about the need for wastewater treatment system permits, yet it is our belief that a number of possibly very difficult problems could be avoided if it was clearly required that an all encompassing permit was required before building. This one permit could then include a checklist of the various requirements for each property.

We would like to emphasize that a building permit has nothing at all to do with building codes. There are many municipalities that do make compliance with building codes part of the building permit, but this is in no way mandatory. Our intent would be to NOT require compliance with the Uniform (or other) Building Code. Rather the permit would be used as a “one stop” checklist to make sure a landowner was in compliance with all applicable requirements.

Then we could mount road signs at all County lines, and institute other advertising, stating “Building Permits ARE Required in Ravalli County”. Although we have not specifically researched this, it seems obvious that any building permit program would be self-funding. The level of enforcement could be adjusted as needed. The focus would be simply to make sure an owner or builder was aware of all the current requirements. It would not be mandatory to inspect all construction, but most drainfields do currently get at least one inspection.

We believe that such a minimally enforced permit program would provide a mechanism to prevent some costly mistakes in the near future, and establish a framework for more complex requirements as our building density increases. Our Board would be happy to discuss this in more detail at your convenience.

Sincerely,

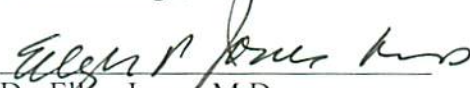
BOARD OF HEALTH


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